



Findley Development for the Rehabilitation of the Fidelity Building, Benton Harbor, and the Youth Building, Battle Creek

Two historic preservation tax credit projects undertaken by Findley Development—the rehabilitation of Benton Harbor’s Fidelity Building and Battle Creek’s Youth Building—resulted in approximately \$11.7 million in rehabilitation investment, the creation of seventy new urban residences, and the strengthening of the cities’ urban cores.

The Fidelity Building is one of the few remaining “skyscrapers” built during Benton Harbor’s heyday of the 1920s. The last tenant left the Fidelity Building in 1976 and the building sat vacant with little or no maintenance for nearly 30 years, reducing it to a crumbling shell. Years of neglect resulted in the loss of most of the interior plaster, woodwork, and mechanical systems, and caused serious structural problems. Adding to the complexity of the project was the fact that the building’s plaster was asbestos rich and had been painted with numerous coats of lead based paint.

Undaunted, Findley set about creating a supportive environment for seniors that would bring people back to the city’s historic urban core. After painstaking remediation efforts the building was recast as thirty-one senior apartments. The rehabilitation retained the historic exterior and the few remaining interior features, including the primary circulation pattern and the main stairs/elevator lobby at each floor, while creating unique and attractive apartments.

Dedicated in 1928 as the Boys and Girls Building, the Art Deco-style Youth Building was the first large-scale philanthropic gift made by W. K. Kellogg to the city of Battle Creek. When the building closed in 1988, the city and the school district slated it for demolition. Concerned citizens stopped the demolition, and the building was stabilized. Over time a community-based vision for future uses was created, the building was aggressively marketed, and a development team with the necessary skills and vision was found in Findley Development.

Findley transformed the Youth Building into the Village at Irving Park, a senior-focused housing development with 25 unique residential units within the historic building. The developer also constructed a new building, containing 14 additional traditional residential units, which is connected to the historic building by an enclosed glass and steel breezeway. The new building was designed and sited to allow the historic building to remain dominant on the site.

Thanks to the vision, courage, and commitment of Findley Development the Fidelity Building and the Youth Building are spectacular community assets once again.



Historic Preservation in Michigan